

Weird, Spooky, Supernatural Stories

Archie

The

BEYOND

SEPT. 10c



"There's no such animal," he cried!



M^R FRANK and I were picking the ponies one day when I started telling him about a sure thing I heard about.

"You say it pays four bucks for every three?" he asked.

"Yep," I replied.

"And can't lose? It automatically wins? Must be illegal!"

"Not a bit," I replied. "In fact, the government very much approves..."

"Our government approves of a horse who can't lose..."

"Who said anything about a horse?" I asked.

"So what else could it be but a horse...?"

"It not only could be—but is—U. S. Savings Bonds," was my prompt reply. "The surest thing running on any track today.

"For every three dollars you invest in U. S. Savings Bonds you get four dollars back after only ten years. And if you're a member of the Payroll Savings Plan—which means you buy bonds automatically from your paycheck—that can amount to an awful lot of money when you're not looking. Hey, what are you doing?"

"Tossing away racing form! The horse I'm betting on from now on is U. S. Savings Bonds."

Automatic saving is sure saving—U.S. Savings Bonds



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SCOURGE of the SCORPION CULT

It was a strange quest that brought Dr. Philip Marston and his lovely daughter, Celin, to the Katika village on the seething Congo river, a quest that most assuredly would end either in breathtaking heroism or death to the dauntless and determined Doctor. For the dangers were incalculable.



DO YOU THINK WE'LL FIND THE GUIDE, MARPER, HERE, OAO?

I CERTAINLY HOPE SO! OUR MISSION IS MUCH TOO DANGEROUS TO UNDERTAKE WITHOUT HIM! HE KNOWS THE JUNGLE BETTER THAN MOST OF THE NATIVES!

AFTER MUCH SEARCHING, MARSTON FINALLY FOUND HIS MAN...

NO, I'M NOT ENGAGED AT PRESENT, DR. MARSTON. BUT IF YOU'RE NOT A HUNTER, JUST WHAT IS YOUR MISSION?

I'M DOING SOME RESEARCH, MR. MARPER. I'M TRYING TO FIND A SERUM WHICH WILL COUNTERACT A SCORPION'S VENOM!



WHAT'S THAT A SERUM THAT WILL...

AH! YOU HAVE DOUBTS AS TO THE POSSIBILITY? WELL, MY PAST RESEARCH HAS REVEALED MY BEING ON THE RIGHT TRACK! BUT TO MAKE A FINAL TEST WILL REQUIRE THE VENOM OF SCORPIONS OF THE CONGO VARIETY!



I BELIEVE THAT THIS SERUM CAN BE MADE BY ACTUALLY USING THE WILD POISON! IT IS SUPPOSED TO COUNTERACT AS ONE OF THE INGREDIENTS! THE SCORPION OF THIS CLIMATE, AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, IS THE DEADLIEST KNOWN TO MANKIND!



CONSIDERING THAT, DR. MARSTON, WOULDN'T YOU BE IMPERILING THE LIFE OF YOUR DAUGHTER BY TAKING HER ALONG?

OH, NOT SUCH BEEN ASSUMING ME FOR SOME TIME. EVEN HANDLES THE CREATURES BETTER THAN I DO!

I'M NOT THE LEAST BIT SUPERSTITIOUS, MR. HARPER!



WELL, YOUR OFFER IS GENEROUS, DOCTOR, BUT YOUR PERSONAL GAINERS —

THEN IT'S SETTLED! AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT US. WE CAN TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES! WE'LL START IN THE MORNING!

STRANGE! IT SEEMS HE'S DELIBERATELY TRYING TO DISGUISE US, BUT WHY?



THE FOLLOWING MORNING, PRIOR TO THE START OF THE TRIP...

TWO BURGOS WOULD'VE BEEN SUFFICIENT FOR OUR TRIP! WHAT'S IN THOSE CANNETS, DOCTOR?

JUST SOME CHEMICAL SUPPLIES. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO DO SOME FURTHER RESEARCH IN THE JUNGLE!



TWO DAYS LATER...

BEYOND THAT POINT IS A SAHARA! SCORPIONS ARE QUITE THICK THERE. SOME OF THEM EXCEEDED TEN INCHES IN LENGTH! FOR SAFETY'S SAKE, DO ADVISE CAMPING HERE!

GOOD! I'LL HELP YOU WITH THE TENTS!



WE CAN SET OUR TRAPS IN THE MORNING AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? WHAT'S THAT FOR?

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES, DOCTOR... JUST IN CASE OUR FIRE ATTACKS ANY SCORPIONS! IT'S A CONCERN-RELATED POISON! THEY CAN'T COME NEAR US WHILE WE'RE SLEEPING!



AN HOUR LATER, MARSTON SUDDENLY AWOKE...

FUNNY... I THOUGHT I HEARD A NOISE! PROBABLY ONE OF THE BURGOS, BUT I'LL TAKE A LOOK ANYWAY! DON'T WANT THEM WANDERING OFF INTO THE SWAMP!



WHAT THE...? THAT SHADOW! IT LOOKED LIKE A MAN! HARPER DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT NATIVES BEING IN THE VICINITY! I'D BETTER TELL HIM ABOUT IT!



HARPER? WHO, HE'S GONE! THEN IT WASN'T A NATIVE... IT WAS HIM! BUT WHERE WOULD HE BE GOING... ESPECIALLY UNARMED! THE FOOL! I'D BETTER FOLLOW HIM! MIGHT BE WILD ANIMALS AROUND HERE!



HE EVIDENTLY KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE HE'S GOING! LUCKILY, THE GROUND IS SOFT... I CAN FOLLOW HIS FOOTPRINTS! AND JUDGING FROM THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM, HE WAS RUNNING!



FOR SEVERAL MINUTES, HARSTON BUMPED THROUGH THE HEAVY FOREST. FINALLY, THE PATH LEDGED AT THE ENTRANCE TO A CAVE...



A CAVE! AND THAT SYMBOL OVER THE ENTRANCE! ITS ALMOST BURNING... FOSBIDDING! BUT I'VE GOT TO ENTER. FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

STEALTHILY, THE DOCTOR INCHED THROUGH THE MYSTERIOUS CAVERN UNTIL HE CAME UPON AN UNEXPECTED SIGHT...

GREAT SCOTT! THOSE PEOPLE... THEY'RE PARTLY SCORPION! AND HARPER'S ONE OF THEM!

HEAR, HE NOW! THIS IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE!



AS YOUR LEADER, I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE A QUEEN. A BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHO WILL BECOME ONE OF US! EVEN NOW SHE IS CLOSE BY!

WHY... HE MEANS CELIA! WHAT HAVE I COME UP AGAINST? I MUST GET BACK TO THE CAMP!



IN VIOLENT FRENZY, HARSTON SPED FROM THE CAVE, ALMOST DISOBLINDING HIS EYES. BUT AS HE RACED BACK TOWARD CAMP, HE SUDDENLY TRIPPED...



WHEN HARPER REGAINED CONSCIOUS-
NESS, IT WAS MORNING AND CELIA
WAS BATHING HIS HEAD AS
HARPER LOOKED ON...

DHH! MY HEAD!
HARPER! YOUR
OH, I JUST HAD
THE MOST
FANTASTIC
DREAM!

JUSTAS NEVER
DURST NOW,
DOCTOR! I
FOUND YOU
UNCONSCIOUS
IN THE JUNGLE!

I HEARD A
NOISE LAST
NIGHT... WENT
TO INVESTIGATE
YOU WERE
GONE
AND...

I HEARD THE
NOISE TOO, AND
WENT OUT! ON
MY WAY BACK
TO MY TENT, I
FOUND YOU LYING
OUT THERE AND
CARRIED YOU
BACK!

SOON AFTER, CELIA WENT OFF
IN SEARCH OF HARPER...

WHAT AM I THINKING! THAT
WAS NO DREAM! HARPER IS
OBVIOUSLY LYING! HE
WOULDN'T INVESTIGATE A
NOISE WITHOUT BEING
ARMED! I CAN'T TURN
BACK WITHOUT HIS SUS-
PECTING ME... AND I
CAN'T TELL CELIA WHILE
HE'S AROUND!

SUDDENLY-

CELE! HELP!
DAD! MR. HARPER!
HELP!

CELIA! GREAT GOTT! SHE'S
OUT THERE ALONE! HURRY,
HARPER, HURRY! SOMETHING
TERRIBLE'S HAPPENED!



I'VE GOT IT!
WHAT CAN
WE DO FOR
HER?

YOU MUST REMAIN HERE!
LET ME TAKE HER WITH ME!
I KNOW OF ONLY ONE WAY
TO SAVE HER LIFE!

ALL RIGHT! BUT HURRY BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

HE'S GOING TO CHANGE HER INTO ONE OF THOSE
HORRIBLE CREATURES! BUT WHAT CAN I DO?
I'M HELPLESS! SHE'D
DIE OTHERWISE!

SHE'LL LIVE,
DOCTOR! I CAN
PROMISE THAT!





WAIT! THERE MAY STILL BE A CHANCE! THIS SCORPION! IF I CAN REMOVE SOME OF ITS VENOM, I MAY STILL BE ABLE TO CONCOCT SOME OF MY SERUM IN TIME!

MEANWHILE, IN THE SPINNY GROTTO, HARPER BROUGHT FORTH SOME OF HIS OWN STRANGE CONCOCTION...

I FEEL SO STRANGE! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

DRINK THIS! IT'LL GIVE YOUR LIFE, BUT THE RESULTS WILL BE STRANGER THAN ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER DREAMED OF!



WHAT AN ODD TASTE! BUT I FEEL STRONGER ALREADY! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THE RESULTS BEING STRANGER?

YOU'LL SEE SOON ENOUGH! BUT NOW YOU NEED REST! COME! I'LL HELP YOU BACK TO CAMP!



I DON'T THINK I'VE MADE ANY MISTAKE, BUT I'VE GOT TO GIVE THE MIXTURE MORE THAN TWELVE HOURS TO SETTLE BEFORE IT CAN BE ADMINISTERED! OH HERE THEY COME! AND CELIA APPEARS TO BE ALL RIGHT!



THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, CELIA! SHE WILL BE ALL RIGHT, WON'T SHE HARPER?

SHE'LL LIVE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN, DOCTOR! BUT I SEE YOU'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTING! HOW IS IT COMING?

IF I TELL HIM OF MY SUCCESS, HE MAY ATTEMPT TO DESTROY MY WORK!

I'M AFRAID I'M ON THE WRONG TRACK! I'LL HAVE TO TRY AGAIN! BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR CURE, HARPER?

IT'S NOT A CURE, DOCTOR! I'M SORRY, BUT IT MUST REMAIN A SECRET!



NOT A CURE, HE SAID! OF COURSE NOT... NOT WITH THESE HORRIBLE RESULTS! BUT THAT WROD TREATMENT COULD POSSIBLY TURN A HUMAN BEING INTO PART SCORPION! WELL, I'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT, FOR THE PRESENT... AND HOPE MY SERUM WILL PROVE TO BE AN ANTIDOTE! OTHERWISE, POOR CELIA!

LOONEY, FEAR LEFT HARSTON
FROM ALLEYS THAT NIGHT...

FOLLOW
ME, CELIA!

SHE'VE GONE WITH
HIM! WHATEVER WE
DO, WE MUST HAVE
PRODUCED SOME
HYPNOTIC TRANCE!



AGAIN FOLLOWING THE STRANGE JUNGLE ONCE, HARSTON OB-
SERVED THE FRIGHTENING SCENE UNDETECTED...

I PROMISED YOU A QUEEN! HERE
SHE IS! BUT THERE IS ANOTHER
MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE!
WE ARE THREATENED WITH
DESTRUCTION! A WICKED
WITCH-DOCTOR IS PREPARING
A POTION WHICH MAY
DESTROY US!



GRUMP! SHE'VE BECOME ONE OF THEM! AND
HARPER IS TELLING THEM ABOUT ME!
THEY'RE SHAKED! I MIGHT BE ABLE
TO MAKE A STAND
AGAINST THEM
BACK AT THE
CAMP!

WE MUST KILL
HIM BEFORE IT
IS TOO LATE!



THEY'RE NOT FAR BEHIND
ME! I'LL BE LUCKY IF I
HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO
PREPARE A HYPNOSIS
OF MY SERUM FOR
CELIA! IF IT DOESN'T
WORK, I'LL NEVER
FORGIVE MYSELF FOR
BRINGING HER ALONG!



FINALLY REACHING THE
CAMP, HARSTON IMMEDIATELY
PREPARED A HYPNOSIS, AS
THE SOUND OF THE ON-
ADVANCING HORDE GREW
LOUDER...

IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO
KILL A FEW IN ORDER TO
DISPERSE THE BEST! I
HEAR THEM COMING
NOW!



THERE HE
IS NOW!
KILL HIM!

THEY'RE CROWDED TOO CLOSE TOGETHER! IF
I SHOOT, I MAY HIT CELIA! I'D BETTER
WAIT TILL THEY GET CLOSER! HARPER'LL
BE FIRST!

AIEEE!

YAHAAH!



AS THE MARCHING CREATURES
APPROACHED, HARSTON OPENED
FIRE, SEEING THEIR LEADER GO
DOWN, THE DEMONIZED FORCE
TOOK BACK TO THEIR HEELS...

IT WORKED! CELIA!
OVER HERE... JOHNNY!
WHA...? SHE DOESN'T
HEAR ME!





QUICKLY TURNING OVER TO HIS ENTRANCED DAUGHTER, MARTON PLUNGED THE NEEDLE INTO HER ARM...

AT LEAST SHE'S NOT CAPABLE OF DOING ANY HARM IN HER CONDITION! NOW FOR THE TEST!

OH, WHAT'S HAPPENING? I-- I FEEL SO STRANGE!



ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, THE SCORPION FEATHERS WITHDREW FROM CELIA...

OH, IT WAS HORRIBLE! I ACTUALLY TURNED INTO A SCORPION!

YES, I KNOW... BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW! AND MY SERUM WORKS! IT'S A SUCCESS!



DOCTOR MARTON!
I-- I--

LOST? MR. HARPER! HE'S WOUNDED!



I WAS, LIKE YOU, DR. MARTON... LOOKING FOR A SERUM TO COUNTERACT THE SCORPION VENOM! I WAS A DOCTOR... TOO! I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE BITTEN... THEN I DRANK MY SERUM! BUT IT HADN'T BEEN PERFECTED! THIS WAS THE RESULT! BUT YOU HAVE DISCOVERED THE RIGHT FORMULA... YOUR SERUM IS A SUCCESS...



BUT WHY TRY TO KILL ME WHEN I HADN'T HAVE SAVED YOU?

ONCE UNDER THE SPELL, I DIDN'T THINK LIKE A MAN... MY MIND WAS CONTROLLED BY SCORPION BLOOD IN ME! MY FOLLOWERS WERE MERE WHO'D ALSO BEEN BITTEN! WHEN I SAVED THEM FROM DEATH, THEY MADE ME THEIR IDOL! I-- GEMMA!



HE'S DEAD! BUT AT LEAST WE KNOW HIS STORY! IF HE HADN'T USED HIS SERUM ON YOU, CELIA... YOU WOULD'VE DIED!

I-- I GUESS I DO OWE MY LIFE TO HIM! BUT IT'S ALL SO STRANGE! NO-BODY WOULD EVER BELIEVE THIS STORY!



I'M AFRAID THEY WOULDN'T... AND THAT'S WHY YOU MUST NEVER MENTION A WORD TO ANYONE ABOUT THIS! THERE'S NO LIMIT TO THE AMOUNT OF ELA A POWER-HUNGRY INDIVIDUAL MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF, IF HE EVER DISCOVERED THE FORMULA FOR HARPER'S VILE SERUM!

I UNDERSTAND! IT WILL BE OUR SECRET!

TRUE TALES of the SUPERNATURAL

II

The mountains of Northern Italy hold the secret of the strange disappearance in the annals of the Supernatural. No investigation has been successful in revealing a solution to a mystery that occurred 65 years ago.

ONE NIGHT, THE ENGINEER OF A SMALL TRAIN THAT RAN BETWEEN TWO MOUNTAIN TOWNS, NOTICED HIS TRAIN BEING LOADED WITH CARDS.

LOOK, MARIO! THEY ARE LOADING COFFINS INTO THE BAGGAGE COMPARTMENT!

2. HEAR THEY ARE REJECTED HUNGRERS, BEING RETURNED TO THEIR HOME TOWNS FOR BURIAL.



THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WALK ON THIS LINE, AND THEY WERE TO GIVE ME A CARD OF DEATH TO CARRY IT IS AN EVIL OMEN!

VERY STRANGE! THE FINAL TRIP IN 1928 WAYS THAN ONE! GOOD LUCK, MY FRIEND! YOU WILL NEED IT TONIGHT!



THE TRAIN PULLED OUT OF THE TERMINAL ON ITS CHOICE-LESS JOURNEY WITH A HEAVY LOAD OF DEADLY MARRIAGE CASES. IT WAS LAST SEEN REMOVED INTO THE MOUNTAINOUS WILDERNESS ON ITS ROUTE.



HOURS PASSED, AND STILL THE TRAIN HAD NOT REACHED ITS DESTINATION. THE MOUNTAIN STATION MASTER AT THE OTHER END OF THE LINE TELEGRAPHED BACK TO THE TERMINAL.

IT'S HOURS LATE AND NO SIGN OF THE TRAIN! AND, NOTICE THE AUTHORITIES TO TRACE THAT TRAIN! I HAVE A FEELING THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED!



A SEARCH PARTY WAS SENT OUT ALONG THE ROUTE THE TRAIN HAD TAKEN. AFTER HOURS OF FURTHER SEARCHING...

NO TRAIN! NO SIGN OF A WRECK OR ACCIDENT! THE TRAIN HAS JUST VANISHED!

WE'VE SEARCHED FOR HOURS WITHOUT FINDING THE TRAIN, PASSENGERS, ENGINEER OR THOSE COFFINS! I'M AFRAID TO THINK WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THOSE POOR SOULS!



AFTER THIS STRANGE OCCURRENCE, THE RAILS OF THE PARTICULAR LINE WERE RIPPED OUT AND THE TUNNELS WERE SEALED, SO THAT NO OTHER TRAIN COULD SUFFER THE FATE OF THE "TRAIN OF DEATH"! ONLY THE MOUNTAINOUS WILDERNESS HOLDS THE SECRET OF THE DISAPPEARANCE!

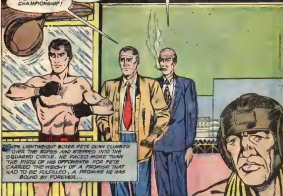


The End

RIDDLE & PETE DUNN'S LAST FIGHT

WHAT'D I TELL YOU, JOE? AIN'T HE A SWEETHEART? LOOK AT THE LEFT-- IT STABS OUT LIKE SUMMER LIGHTNING! AND DOES HE PACK A PUNCH IN THAT RIGHT? THE BOY IS READY, JOE! READY FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP!

I DON'T KNOW! HE DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE YET! LET HIM RIDE ANOTHER YEAR, MIKE! DON'T PUSH YOUR SON TOO FAST!



A YEAR? YOU KNOW I CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG! YOU WERE THERE WHEN THE DOC TOLD ME!



AW, MIKE-- DOCTORS HAVE BEEN WRONG BEFORE! SO YOU GOT A BUN HEART? IT DON'T ASKIN A THING, MIKE! YOU'LL BE AROUND TO SEE THE KID BECOME CHAMP IN A YEAR, FROM NOW!



ARE THERE FIGHTS THEY ALMOST MADE ME
LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMP OF THE WORLD! BUT THEN
I BROKE 'EM! AN' I WAS A NOBODY! RE,
MIKE DUNN, WASHED UP! BUT NOW MY BOY,
PETE, IS GOIN' TO DO WHAT HIS OLD MAN
COULDN'T! HE'LL BE CHAMP!



HOW'D MY BOYS
ARE YOU GOIN'
TO TAKE TISSE
BURKE TONIGHT,
WON'T

YEAH!
I'LL
TAKE
JUN,
DAD!



THAT'S THE WAY TO TALK! THEN,
AFTER HE LICKS BURKE, HE'LL
GO BACK INTO TRAINING!
AND THE NEXT STOP WILL BE
THE CHAMPIONSHIP! THREE
OF IT—PETE DUNN, LIGHT-
WEIGHT CHAMP OF THE
WORLD!

THAT'S A BIG
ORDER! BUT I'LL
TRY TO FILL THE
BILL! I'LL REALLY
WORK BUCKS
OVER FOR YOU,
DAD!



AND THAT NIGHT

POUR IT ON TO HIM.
KID? POSE IT ON!

GET 'EM, KID!
GET 'EM!



SUDDENLY...

MIKE!

JOE! MY
TICKER!
I... OHMY



AT THAT MOMENT, PETE DE-
LIVERED AN A-BIG PUNCH

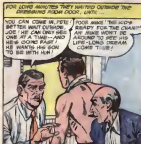
7-8-9-10! IT'S DAD'S
HEART!
OUT!



WHAT HAPPENED
TO DAD? NOW IS
HE... JOE?

I DON'T KNOW, KID!
HE'S TICKER. THEY'RE
TAKIN' HIM TO THE
DRESSIN' ROOM! THE
DOC'LL BE THERE!





FIVE LONG MINUTES THEY WAITED OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM DOOR, LATE ...

YOU CAN COME IN, PETE! BETTER WAIT OUTSIDE. JOE! HE CAN ONLY SEE ONE AT A TIME--AND HE'S GOING FAST! HE WANTS HIS SON TO BE WITH HIM!

POOR MAN! THE KIDS READY FOR THE CHAMP? AN' MAN WON'T BE AROUND TO SEE HIS LIFE-LONG DREAM COME TRUE!



I KNOW I'M GOIN' GON! LISTEN TO ME! PROMISE YOU'LL WIN THE LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP! PROMISE! THERE'LL BE NO REGRET FOR ME UNTIL YOU DO! FOR YOUR POP--SAY YOU'LL DO IT!

POOR DAD! I'LL WIN IT!



I'LL BE WITH YOU KID! RIGHT IN YOUR CORNER! YOU WON'T SEE ME, BUT I'LL BE THERE! AND YOU'LL DO WHAT I FAILED TO DO! YOU'LL BE CHAMP! TELL ME NOTHING! STAND IN YOUR WAY TILL YOU'RE THE CHAMP!

NOTHING I'LL STAND IN MY WAY, DAD! I PROMISE!



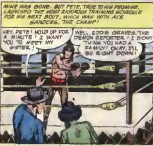
I'LL BE IN YOUR CORNER, KID! REMEMBER! YOU PROMISED! YOU ... *Oh my!*

DAD!



THAT'S NOW THREE ARE, KID! MAKE WAS A GREAT JOB! HE ALWAYS WANTED YOU TO BE CHAMP! DON'T LET HIM DOWN, KID!

I PROMISE! I PROMISE! KID! I'LL GOIN' TO BE CHAMP!



MAN! MAN! GONE. BUT PETE, TRUE TO HIS PROMISE, LAUNCHED THE BEST BACKSTAGE TRAINING BOULDER FOR HIS NEXT BOY, WHICH WAS WITH ACE GARCIA, THE CHAMP!

HEY, PETE! HOLD UP FOR A MINUTE! I WANT YOU TO MEET MY GYMER!

WELL, COOL! GRAYS, THE DEMON REPORTER! I DON'T THINK YOU HAD A RAINY! OKAY, I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN!



CHARLOTTE. THIS IS PETE CONN!

HELLO, CHARLOTTE!

HELLO, PETE!

AND FROM THIS CHASE, MEETING SPENDING A ROMANCE, FOR THE FIGHTER AND THE ONE, FELL DEEPERATED IN LOVE, AND SHE BECAME A FREEDOM FIGHTER TO HIS BEARING CAMP

IT'S A PERFECT NIGHT, ISN'T IT, HONEY?

ONLY ONE THING WOULD MAKE IT PERFECT FOR ME, PETE! IF ONLY YOU WEREN'T FIGHTING NEXT MORNING! I HAVE TWO THINGS ON MY MIND IN THE BUNGALOWS! -- SOME CAN GET YOU A JOB WRITING SPORTS! WHY DON'T YOU HAND UP YOUR GLOVES?



SURELY, PETE'S MANAGER APPEARED ON THE SCENE...

THAT'S A PRETTY SPEECH! YOU WANT EVERYONE TO SAY HE'S YELLOW? PETE AIN'T GUTTER!

IF YOU LOVE ME, PETE, YOU WON'T MAKE ME GO THROUGH THE ASHES OF ANOTHER FIGHT!

I CAN'T SUT, CHAR! I DO LOVE YOU, BUT I HAVE TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS FIGHT!



I CAN'T, DARLING! NOT YET, ANYWAY! BUT IF I WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP, I'LL... I'LL SUT!

NO YOU WON'T! BECAUSE THERE'LL BE A FIGHT AFTER THAT, THEN ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER! YOU'LL GO ON LIKE ALL THE REST OF THEM UNTIL YOUR PUNCH-DRUNK! BUT NOW BEFORE YOUR CHAMP!



ALL RIGHT! MAKE IT YOUR WAY! GO ON, FIGHT! UNTIL YOUR A BURNING PUNCHING BAG! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH A FUG!

NO BABY... YOU'RE WRONG!



DON'T, PETE! LET HER GO! YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T SUT! AND YOU KNOW WHY?

CHARLOTTE!

BECAUSE OF DAD! YOU KNOW, JOE-- I FEEL THAT HE'S WITH ME! WATCHING ME EVERY MINUTE! HE'S WAITING, UNTIL THEY CALL ME LIGHT-WEIGHT CHAMP!

THAT'S RIGHT, PETE! HE IS WATCHING YOU! AND WHEN YOU FIGHT, HE'LL BE IN YOUR CORNER! YOU CAN'T LET HIM DOWN!

I AIN'T GOIN' TO LET HIM DOWN! I'LL WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP FOR HIM! BECAUSE I MADE THE PROMISE! BUT I LOVE CHARLOTTE-- AND I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE HER!



TIME ROLLED ON, AND SOON THE CRUCIAL DAY ARRIVED —
THE DAY OF THE CHAMPIONSHIP BOUT.

IT'S YOUR LAST
WORKOUT, KID!
TONIGHT, YOU'RE
IN THERE
PUNCHING
FOR KEEPS!

I'M GLAD! AFTER TOMORROW,
DAD CAN REST IN PEACE!
THE WORK HE STARTED
WILL BE FINISHED!



SUDDENLY...

PETE! IT'S CHARLOTTE —
SHE'S BEEN STRUCK
BY A HIT-AND-RUN
DRIVER! SHE'S IN
THE HOSPITAL!
CALLING
FOR YOU!

WHAT? I'LL BE WITH
YOU AS SOON
AS I GET
DRESSED!

YOU CAN'T
DO, KID!
THERE'S
THE FIGHT!



I'LL BE THERE FOR THE FIGHT! GET OUT
OF MY WAY, JOE! CHARLOTTE
NEEDS ME!



SOON... IT HADN'T MUCH
FURTHER — JUST
OVER THE MOUNTAIN
ROAD! I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO SAY, PETE!
SHE ASKED FOR YOU
THE MOMENT SHE
OPENED HER EYES!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, BOSS! I
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
I'LL BE BACK IN PLINY
OF TIME FOR THE FIGHT!
BUT THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT
NOW! IT'S CHARLOTTE!
I LOVE HER!



SOON, AT THE HOSPITAL...

ABOUT
IN HERE,
HE
DOWN!

I'LL WAIT FOR YOU,
PETE! YOU'LL
WANT TO BE
ALONE
WITH HER!



PETE'S
YOU'VE
COME!

SURE, HONEY! YOU
DON'T THINK I'D
STAY AWAY,
DID YOU!



PETE, I'M... NOT... I WON'T LIVE!
PROMISE ME — YOU'LL HAND UP YOUR
GLOVES AFTER THE FIGHT! PROMISE
ME, PETE! I KNOW YOU
WANT TO BE CHAMP...
BUT AFTERWARDS —
YOU WON'T FIGHT
AGAIN, PETE!
YOU WON'T FIGHT
AGAIN!

NO, BABLING,
NO! NEVER,
AGAIN! I SWEAR!
I'LL HAND UP MY
GLOVES! AFTER...
THIS ONE, I'LL
NEVER FIGHT
AGAIN!





THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR. NOW I CAN GO AWAY! PETE, I LOVE YOU... CHARLOTTE? SHE'S DEAD!



MY KID SISTER... GONE! I HAVE TO LEAVE NOW, BOB! I HAVE A COUPLE OF PROMISES TO KEEP!



AS PETE DROVE BACK OVER THE TREACHEROUS MOUNTAIN ROAD, A FURIOUS STORM BROKE OUT, LASHING THE ROADS WITH SHEETS OF RAIN...
I MADE TWO PROMISES-- AND I'LL KEEP THEM BOTH! IT'S GETTING LATE! I'LL HAVE TO STEP ON IT!

ON A TREACHEROUS CURVE, PETE LOST MOMENTARY CONTACT OF THE CAR, AND...



CRASH!

AT THE FOOT ARMED, HALF AN HOUR BEFORE THE TIME FOR THE MATCH...



KID? I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER COME! I PHONED THE HOSPITAL! I'M SORRY ABOUT HER! BUT YOU'D BETTER HURLE INTO YOUR TOSS! IT'S NINE-THIRTY! YOU'RE BEHIND TIME!

YEAH! I WAS DELAYED!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

LISTEN TO ME, KID! KEEP YOUR LEFT HAND IN HIS BACK! DO YOU HEART?

YEAH! I HEAR! DON'T WORRY, JOE! BANDS CAN'T DO A THING TO ME!



TIME? YOU'D BETTER GET INTO THE RING, PETE!

YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, KID?

I'VE NEVER BEEN BETTER! AFTER-TO-NIGHT, DAD CAN SLEEP FOREVER! AND SO CAN I! I MADE TWO PROMISES-- AND I'LL KEEP THEM!



TRUE TALES of the SUPERNATURAL

#12

In the late 19th Century, a certain Captain Morgan and a friend arrived in London and sought lodgings for two nights in a large old-fashioned inn. After sleeping in his room for a while, Morgan was suddenly awakened by a great flapping of wings close to him. He sat up in bed and beheld...



AND YET MORROW NOTICED THAT HE NEVER ONCE TOUCHED THE BIRD. FINALLY, HE SAW THE CREATURE FLUTTER DOWN ON A SOFA IN A CORNER OF THE ROOM...



BUT TO HIS UTTER AMAZEMENT, THE WHITE BIRD SEEMED TO PAUSE AND DISAPPEAR UNDER HIS GRASP! HE WAS CATCHING THE AIR, HE BEHEAVED EVERY PART OF THE ROOM IN WHAT NO BIRD WOULD BE FOUND!



THE NEXT DAY ALFRED TOLD AN ONE OF HIS FRIENDS, BUT ORDERED HIM TRAVELLING COMPANION TO CHANGE ROOMS WITH HIM FOR THAT NIGHT.



THE FOLLOWING MORNING...

THE STRANGE BIRD, CAPTAIN IT APPEARED AS IF IN A VISION AND ATTACKED ME! WHEN I TRIED TO BEAT IT OFF, IT WAS LIKE HITTING AT THIN AIR!

I KNOW! THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU TO SLEEP THERE LAST NIGHT! THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME THE NIGHT BEFORE, BUT I WAS AFRAID IT WAS ONLY MY IMAGINATION! BUT NOW...



The End

Black Wings of the Demon Gondolier





WELL, TO BEGIN WITH, THIS VAMPIRE'S IDENTITY HAS BEEN DEFINITELY ESTABLISHED BACK IN 1830 HE WAS KNOWN AS VINCENZO TRIANO... A NON-SOLICIT! MANY WONDERED HOW A SIMPLE BONDOLIER COULD HAVE ATTAINED HIS WEALTHY...

AND JUST HOW DID HE DO IT?



HE INDULGED IN THE SIMPLE ART OF UN-DETECTED MURDER AND ROBBERY. WHEN ENGAGED BY A WEALTHY PATRON, HE'D SHADE HIS BONDOLA FROM THE USUAL ROUTES TO A SECRET CAVE BENEATH A CERTAIN DURE'S PALACE...

HMM! THESE FOOLS WITH ALL THEIR WEALTH! THEIR JEWELS AND GOLD WILL SOON BE MINE!

"THIS CAVE SERVED HIS PURPOSES WELL. FOR HERE HE ALSO DISPOSED OF THE EVIDENCE BY WEIGHING DOWN HIS VICTIM'S BODIES AND TOSING THEM INTO THE WATER..."



HAYRA! I'LL SOON BE THE RICHEST GONDOLIER IN ALL VENICE!



FINALLY CAPTURED, TRIANO WAS NARRATED, BUT NOT BEFORE LEAVING SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS WITHIN OBSCURE RELATIVES. THIS RELATIVE, A SERVANT IN THE PALACE, CLAIMED THE BODY AND PLACED IT IN A COFFIN IN A HIDDEN ROOM OF THE PALACE, UNKNOWN TO THE OCCUPANTS.

BUT NOW, TRIANO CONTINUED CLAIMING VICTIMS... NOT FOR WEALTH BUT FOR THEIR BLOOD! AFTER DEATH, HE TURNED INTO A VAMPIRE! AND THAT'S ALL THE INFORMATION I HAVE!



PERHAPS I'LL BE ABLE TO LEARN MORE FROM THE VENETIAN POLICE.

ANYWAY, IN VENICE, CHARE IMMEDIATELY VISITED THE POLICE...



SI, SIGNORE CHARE, WE HAVE TURNED 32 PALACE UPSIDE-DOWN, BUT WE DISCOVERED NOTHING! WE ARE HELPLESS!

HMM, TOO BAD! WELL, MY WIFE AND I ARE DINING OUT! CAN'T KEEP HER WAITING! GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN!



LATER...

OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL MEAL, DARLING! NOW LET'S HEAT A BONDOLA! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO RIDE IN ONE!

IF YOU KEEP INDULGING IN THESE EXPENSIVE ITEMS, THE HONEYMOON WILL BE OVER BEFORE IT'S STARTED!



LOOK! HERE'S ONE
WORTHY FOR US!
AND IT'S THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL ON THE
CANAL!

GOOD THING I BROUGHT
MY GUN ALONG JUST FOR
SAFETY'S SAKE

WAIT A MINUTE, LOUISE!
THE SCHOOLER DOESN'T
SEEM TO BE AROUND!



I DON'T CARE. . . WE'LL
JUST WAIT! IT LOOKS SO
COMFORTABLE AND SHINY!
HERE. . . HELP ME IN!

IT'S VERY DOUBTFUL
THAT I'D BE ABLE TO SPOT
TRIANG RIGHT AWAY! WELL,
I'VE GOT TWO WEEKS
IN WHICH TO GET A
LEAD!



AFTER WAITING SEVERAL MINUTES,
LOUISE SUDDENLY MADE A STARTLING
DISCOVERY. . .

DEARIE—LOOK!
WE'RE DRIFTING
WITH THE CURRENT!
WE'RE IN MID-
STREAM!

WHAT? WELL,
I'LL BE . . . I DON'T
BE FRIGHTENED. . .
HONEY! IT'LL BE
ALL RIGHT! WE'LL
PROBABLY JUST
DRIFT UP TO SOME
DOCK!



GOODY! LOOK—
OVER THERE! IT'S
ITS A BAT?

GREAT GUNS!

IS THIS POSSIBLE? CAN THIS BE
TRIANG'S SCHOOL? IT'S FANTASTIC—
TWO CONCURRENTLY! AND YET THE
SCHOOLER SEEMS TO BE FOLLOWING
THAT BAT'S COURSE!



DEARIE! I HAVE A
STRANGE FEELING
SOMETHING'S WRONG!
THIS ISN'T NATURAL!
IT'S

LOUISE—LISTEN! I
DON'T WANT TO DIS-
TURB YOU BEFORE, BUT
I MUST TELL YOU NOW
I'M WORKING ON A
CASE HERE!



QUICKLY, DEARIE! TELL
LOUISE THE ENTIRE STORY,
THEN, TO REASSURE HER

WE'RE SAFE THOUGH,
LOUISE! I CAME PREPARED!
I HAVE MY GUN!

THE BAT? BEHOLD—
THE BAT'S HOME!
THERE'S
A MAN
THERE
HOOF!



AND AS THE SCHOOLER GREW
TOWARD THE PLATFORM. . .

THIS IS ONE
TIME, TRIANG.
WHEN YOUR
VICTIMS HAVE
NOT COME,
UNPUNISHED!

SO YOU KNOW
MY NO MATTER!
AND THAT MAN
DON'T YOU KNOW
THAT ONLY A
SILVER BULLET
CAN
KILL A
VAMPIRE!



THIS BLUFF BETTER WORK!

MY CARTRIDGE CHAMBER IS LOADED WITH SILVER BULLETS, TRIANG! I'M INSPECTOR O'HARE OF SCOTLAND YARD... AND I INTEND TO DESTROY YOU!

WE SEEM TO BE IN EACH OTHER'S POWER! I HAVE YOU TRAPPED IN HERE, TO



WITH A SWIFT MOVEMENT, TRIANG SUDDENLY WHIRLED AROUND AND FLUNG A CORNER OF HIS FLOWING CAPE OVER THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIGHT IN THE DRY GATE

I'LL LEAVE YOU TO PERISH WHILE I ESCAPE!

DENNIS! THE TORCH!



RELIGHTING THE TORCH, DENNIS WAS NOT SURPRISED TO GET TRIANG BACK

HE DISAPPEARED! THERE'S ANOTHER EXIT AROUND HERE SOMEPLACE... BUT WE'LL NEED THIS TORCH TO FIND IT!

DENNIS! THE WALL! IT'S OPENING! IT OPENED WHEN YOU TOUCHED THE TORCH-HOLDER!



THIS IS QUITE A SET-UP! TRIANG IS SHREWD! WE WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE HIM, LOUISE! IT'S A GOOD THING WE DIDN'T CALL MY BLUFF WHEN I TOLD HIM HE HAD SILVER BULLETS!

IN THE DARK HE MUST'VE COME UP THIS WAY!



UP THE STEPS AND THROUGH A GLASSING PANEL, DENNIS AND LOUISE FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE MAIN HALLWAY OF THE PALACE

WE'RE SAFE NOW, DEARY! COME ON, THOSE PURPLES THIS MUST BE THE ENTRANCE!

I STILL HAVE TO GOODE PURPLES ALL OVERLET'S GET TO OUR HOTEL!



MEANWHILE, IN TRIANG'S HIDDEN CHAMBER...

DO YOU'VE SWORN TO DESTROY ME, EH, INSPECTOR O'HARE? WELL, I THINK I'LL TURN THE TABLES! WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS... ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WIFE BECOMES MY NEXT VICTIM!



THE NEXT DAY, DENNIS AGAIN VISITED THE POLICE.

MY BLUFF ABOUT THE SILVER BULLETS WORKED, BUT IF YOU WISH TO AVOID FURTHER DEATHS, WE MUST SEARCH THE PALACE AGAIN!

VERY WELL, SHERIFF O'HARE... BUT I TELL YOU WE WILL FIND NOTHING!

FOR HOURS THE SEARCH WENT ON...

I'VE BEEN THROUGH ALL THE GROUND FLOOR ROOMS! THE HIDDEN ROOM COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE DOWN HERE!

AND IT IS IN SAME UP-STAIRS, SURELY! NO TRACE OF ANYONE!



I WON'T GIVE UP TILL I FIND IT! HE'S SOMEWHERE IN THE PALACE RIGHT NOW, SLEEPING!

BUT IT GROWS DARK EVEN NOW! HE WILL SOON AWAKEN AND WE'LL BE IN HIS POWER!



MEANWHILE, A MESSENGER ARRIVED AT DENNIS' HOTEL, WITH A MESSAGE FOR LOUISE...

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HUSBAND! HE WISHES YOU TO ACCOMPANY ME TO THE PALACE, DENORA!

WELL, AT LAST! FINE HOMEWORK! I SIT HOME WHILE HE CHASES AFTER NAPPERS!



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, ON THE CANAL...

DENNIS MUST HAVE CAPTURED OR DESTROYED THAT HORRIBLE MAN! BUT WHY WOULD HE HAVE ME MEET HIM HERE OF ALL PLACES? AND WHY AREN'T WE ENTERING THE PALACE FROM THE FRONT ENTRANCE?



MR. PEPINO... YOU HAVE SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING THE LADY HERE AFTER ALL! YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR MASTER WELL!

THANKS! THEN... IT WAS A TRICK! DENNIS DIDN'T SEND FOR ME! WHO-WHERE IS HE?



UPSTAIRS... SEARCHING FOR MY HIDDEN CHAMBER! THE POLICE WERE TOO UNIMAGINATIVE TO DISCOVER IT! BUT YOUR HUSBAND MAY SUCCEED WHEN THEY FAILED! AND THAT IS WHY I HAD YOU BROUGHT HERE!

I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



HE ALONE HAS THE INTELLIGENCE... THEREFORE THE POWER TO DESTROY ME! WITH YOU AS MY HOSTAGE, I WILL FORCE HIM TO GIVE UP THIS IDEA! FORCE! HE'S CONVINCED OF YOUR DANGER, HIS LOVE FOR YOU WILL OVERPOWER HIS SENSE OF DUTY... AND YOU WILL HELP DISRUSS HIM!







O'HARE!

RELEASE HER, TRIANO!
YOUR BLOOD-SUCKING DAYS
ARE OVER!

DEMIUS!
YOUR TORCH!
USE YOUR
TORCH! HE
CAN'T STAND
FIRE!



ARRRRRRRR!
NO...NOT FIRE!
MY WINGS...YOU'LL
SCORCH THEM!

BACK! HURRY UP, O'HARE!
I'VE GOT YOUR VAMPIRE OF
THE CANALS AT BAY!



AT LAST! THE
PEOPLE OF VENICE
OWE YOU...
O'BERRY!

OUT OF MY WAY,
FOOL! YOU'LL
NEVER TAKE ME!
I'LL LIVE ON... AND
CLAIM MORE VICTIMS!

WATCH
OUT!
OR I
BURN
HIM!



DRIVEN TO SPEED WHICH ONLY A SENSE OF SELF-SURVIVAL
COULD IMPEL, TRIANO FLEW UP THE STAIRS AND INTO HIS
CHAMBER, CHASE HOT ON HIS TRAIL...

HE'S TRAPPED HIMSELF.
UNLESS THERE'S A
WINDOW IN THAT
ROOM!



BUT I MADE IT!
I'M FREE!

TRIANO!
STOP!

WITH CAREFUL AIM, O'HARE NURLED
THE FLAMING TORCH INTO THE
WAGGING SPREAD WINGS, AS TRIANO
PREPARED TO CRASH INTO THE
BLACK, BISMAL HEAV.



INSTANTLY, THE DEMONICAL
DEFENDER OF DEATH PLUMMETED
EARTHWARD, HELPLESSLY, AS THE
BRIGHT FLAMES ENVELOPED HIS
DESPIRABLE FORM

MY WINGS ARE
ASIDE!
ARRRRRRRR!



OUTSIDE THE PALACE, A STRANGE
SIGHT GREETED THE GROUP...

THERE'S YOUR VAMPIRE, CHIEF,
REVERTED TO HIS ORIGINAL FORM
A BAT! HIS HEART HAS BEEN
PIERCED BY THAT SPIKE!

SIGNOR O'HARE,
YOU HAVE PER-
FORMED A MOST
NOBLE ACT! FOR DE
CITIZENS OF VENICE,
I THANK YOU!

FROM ANOTHER WORLD

I kept seeing sparks. But every time one of those half-people saw me, that antenna either hit the street and the person vanished, or the person stood until I got close and often beat it. They were feet-footed things.

I suppose they spread the word about me. Anyway, when I approached the Empire State building, a sort of phalanx of those people spread out as best they could across the street. Then two big shots, dressed in fancy tunics and fancy antennas that looked like beamed crowns, put down a sort of tripod a couple of paces in front of those half-people.

I could see then that, although they could touch that mass of still life on the sidewalk, they didn't like to do it—and wouldn't if they could help it. While they could touch, their touch was right through clothes and all. But such metal as a man or woman wore—like a watch or a ring, and money, too—caused a spark that made those half-people squirm. And if their antennas touched anything metal, it all but knocked those half-people down.

I watched curiously as they brought out something that looked like an enlarged telescope about four feet long and about three inches thick and put it on that tripod. The mogul with the fanciest antenna crown seemed to be taking a lot—although I could hear nothing. And the other mogul drew a bead on me with that telescope gadget.

I fell here to a bad case of fright and dacked behind a car while I wondered what was coming. I peeped out.

That moment got where hot and it glowed, even in the urbiely glare from the Empire State tower. And every time a smoky bar showed for an instant at the muzzle, the end pointed at me, I'd get a shock. But it felt like a dry 220 volt—not enough to make a muscle twitch.

It was pretty definite that we weren't going to be friends, so I took out the automatic and fired. I got down close to the street and shot upward so the bullet would hit the side of a building. I didn't like the idea of hitting one of my own folks, even if they were war.

Nothing happened. We walked on the same world, but we were two kinds of life. While I could feel their weapon shock me, they couldn't feel the bullets from my gun, although I thought I could see the

tiny flash of a spark as the bullet went through them. Then I took a good aim and fired at the big shot's crown. Pffffff!—and no mogul.

Of course it was just a lucky shot because I've met that good. But you should have seen those half-people scatter. They even left that shocking gun on the tripod. I went up and touched it. The minute my third came in contact with it, the thing began to melt.

Those half-people were all racing to the side of the Empire State. They put their right fingers against it, sprang up on their toes and lifted their feet off the sidewalk. Then they scooted up the side of the building and out of my line of vision.

By looking through that dark glass, I could study the tower. I could make out the framework of that tiny bullet that had shot out at sight on me. I supposed it was back. That framework was all that was visible. It was metal, of course, somewhere within the range of our earthly vibrations.

I supposed those half-people were above or below our vibration range. That was why they were semi-transparent. But now they were seeking to become of earth and conquer this world. Busting up the current had enabled them to halt us, and to exist on our planet. But they still had a long way to go before they could use anything we had made.

But it was my world and I wanted them out of it. Only, how?

I don't know when the idea first came to blast that tower with an army of tiny gun. But I do know that when I thought of it I started acting without any more debate. Those half-people probably gave me the idea. They had brought back from wherever they went a bigger, screw-loading shock-gun. They kept pointing it at me. And it kept knocking me down with the shock. It got me pretty mad. Then I glued rubber on the soles of my shoes and could hardly feel the shock.

You'd be surprised how hard it was to find anything. I couldn't ask anybody. I had to look through offices, records, files. I had to chop short-cuts, shoot locks off—then find about guns where I had come across one that I thought would do.

I was out in Brooklyn then, at a big army post. It was too far away, I decided, for my uncertain aim.

with a field gun. So I pulled that gun—it was on wheels—though that still-life traffic all the way to Palace Street at Smith, if you know where that is. By that time I had more than enough of thrashing through stalled traffic. The flow of traffic is wonderful the way it never jams. But standing still it chokes up the streets. So I had to move plenty of things to get that field gun by.

I kept calling myself a fool. But I kept wondering what would happen if I blasted that tower with an exploding shell. If those half-people had our current—the negative or the positive ions—captured and booted up in something up in that tower, and I broke something there with an exploding shell, what would happen?

It was time to find out, and I pointed that gun down that wide canyon of a street and over its rim and fired. The gun went one way, I went the other, and a lot of windows fell out of buildings. That little tower was noisy dynamite.

I hadn't thought about aiming it down. So I blasted it against a small but loaded truck, drove another head on the tower and fired again. It was too bad about the windows.

There was an awful mob of people on the sidewalks, and a lot of cars on the street. In fact I had to move a couple of cars to get the head I wanted. But I couldn't hit that tower. I ran out of shells, and I kept running out of shells until there were eight empty wheelbarrows—and a ninth one with a full load by that gun.

I was plenty tired and dirty by then, so I called a bath to my private war. I looked around for a Panther's Ken, a bath and a change of clothes.

I didn't let that panther kiss me but twice that time. So it wasn't long before I was back at the gun, bathed, shaved, in brand-new clothes and with my pockets all but heavy with dough. I liked to keep my pockets full of bills so I could pay for everything I picked up. But I realized, of course, that if our world ever got started again, somebody was going to have some tall bookkeeping to do on balance books at those places where I happened to stop in for a rest.

I missed that tower a few more times. When I fired the next to the last shell I wasn't looking for it when it happened.

The tower seemed to swell to enormous size. The blinding light got brighter. And joining with the echoing roar of that field gun came the cracking noise that I heard when I got shocked. Then the tower, exploding as it was, showered all the sky that I could see with flaming sheets of fire.

I felt the shock, but not too hot. I jerked and twisted, falling back on the sidewalk, hanging against a pretty heavy dame who fell back against other people.

"Ever see a still state in a mirror change to show slow motion? That's the way it looked, & fast beginning slowly to move. An arm starting a swing. A woman's mouth, open, as usual, beginning to form words again.

I watched it, spellbound as I was on the sidewalk. Before I could get on my feet, life was back as if nothing had happened. Then, no more than a second later, a complete race of pandemonium broke out.

Those people which the shock had knocked me against bumped into one another. They began to fall like pins in a bowling alley. Cars I had moved out of place began colliding with other cars. More cars plowed onto that field gun and those empty wheelbarrows.

People began screaming because that gun and those empty wheelbarrows and empty shells were not there when they had stopped moving. And then they were there without the passing of any time. To them, I mean.

Don't ever think that when people mean business they can't open their mouths, scream, and make a noise. But it was mine to me. I suppose that if a man can hear in anybody, then I was hearing at them. I was glad.

I wanted to celebrate. The best way to celebrate that I know of is to down a Panther's Ken. So I ducked and searched for a bar. And within the short walk of a block I found normal people who were merely slightly curious about all the noise up the street where that field gun was.

I had to tell the bartender how to mix a Panther's Ken. He stared at me with his eyes bulging when I bent the elbow. I saw myself in the bar mirror, and from the way I needed a haircut I didn't blame him. So I went to a barber shop and got cut.

The radio was putting on special broadcasts before I left there, reporting evidence of things hard to explain. The Empire State tower and part of the very top floor had entirely disappeared. The Pennsy Railroad wanted to know how a bargained switch engine from Jacksonville could get into their New York station. And it wasn't three hours before the public knew of the clear track that crashed from the Pennsy Station down through Jacksonville and up the sidewalk where I had found that balloon-stuffed puffing-billy.

The area around the Empire State building was blocked off. Learned men were struggling to define the charred framework of the shop those half-people used. They were trying to find out what those antennas were. The country was getting excited.

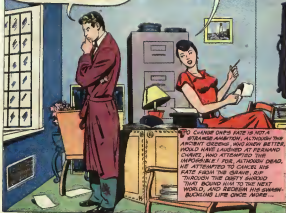
I was all wrapped up in watching the clock ticking, in watching the sun behave and go down and make way for night, and in watching the world being alive. It was good to live.

THE END.

Return from the Great Abyss

... FERNAND KNEW HE WAS BEING FORWARDED. KNEW THE VENDETTA WAS CLOSING IN TO STRIKE AS HE RACED FOR THE... THE... -- GLORIA, THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THIS! I CAN'T SEEM TO GO ON! IT'S AS IF SOMEONE WERE STOPPING MY THOUGHTS!

YOU'RE JUST DOD-THRO, FRED! YOU'VE WRITTEN "THE VENDETTA" AT A KILLING PACE! WHY DON'T YOU RELAX!



TO CHANGE ONE'S FATE IS NOT A STRANGE ANTHRON, ALTHOUGH THE ANCIENT GREEKS, WHO KNOW BETTER, WOULD HAVE LAUGHED AT FERNAND CHAVEZ, WHO ATTEMPTED THE IMPOSSIBLE! FOR, ALTHOUGH DEAD, HE ATTEMPTED TO CHANGE HIS FATE FROM THE GRAVE, RIP THROUGH THE CURTAIN SHROUD THAT BOUND HIM TO THE NEXT WORLD, AND REFORM HIS SWAMP-BUCKING LIFE ONCE MORE...



FOR HEAVENS' SAKE, GLORIA, LOOK AT THAT AFFAIRITION!

SHHH! BUT IT'S FERNAND CHAVEZ!

POOF! OF COURSE, IT IS! FERNAND DON MIGUEL CHAVEZ! AT YOUR SERVICE, GRACIAS, SEÑOR!

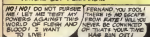


BUT YOU'RE DEAD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I AM NOT DEAD! THAT IS, IN A WAY OF SPEAKING. I AM ALIVE! BUT IT IS WHY WHO WOULD KILL ME FOR-EVER! NO, FERNAND CHAVEZ DOES NOT CHOOSE TO RETURN TO THE GRAVE!



BUT SUDDENLY AN AGELESS, TOWERING FIGURE CAME INTO THE ROOM, UNSEEN BY ANYONE BUT FERNAND...



TWO DAYS LATER...



A FEW HOURS LATER, AT THE BELLOC PUBLISHING COMPANY...



WITHOUT WARNING, FERNAND MADE HIS
ILL-TIMED APPEARANCE...

HERE'S THE PEN!
WHA... A WHAT
ON EARTH IS
THE MATTER?

GET DOWN, YOU FOOL! GET
DOWN! WHAT DO YOU WANT
HERE? ARE YOU TRYING TO
DRIVE ME OUT OF MY HEAD?



MR. LATHROP! WHAT'S
THE MEANING OF THIS
EXHIBITION? WHAT
KIND OF TALK
IS THIS?

LIES, LIES, ALL LIES
IN YOUR BOOK! NO,
MR. LATHROP, YOU WILL
NOT KILL ME OFF! YOU
WILL NEVER FINISH
THAT BOOK!



D-DON'T YOU
SEE HIM?
FERNAND
CHAVEZ, THE
SCOUNDREL
FROM MY
BOOK? ON MIGHTY
THE SEE... I
DUNNO HE'S
NOT VISIBLE
TO YOU!

I-I'M GOING!
PERHAPS...
ANOTHER TIME,
WHEN YOUR
FEELINGS...
BETTER!



WELL, YOU DRIVE, I
DUNNO YOU'RE
SATISFIED? NO, NO,
MR. BELLOC. I
DON'T MEAN YOU!
I... I DUNNO I'VE
BEEN WORKING
TOO HARD. I'LL
SEE YOU IN A
FEW WEEKS...
AFTER MY
VACATION!

YES, YES! AN
ASTONISHING
IDEA! PLEASE
QUESTIONS!
I'M SURE
YOU'LL BE ALL
RIGHT THEN,
MR. LATHROP!
GOOD-BYE!



BACK AT THE LATHROP HOME...

... AND THEN
THE MISERABLE
FERNAND MADE
HIS ENTRANCE.
MR. BELLOC
THOUGHT I
WAS MAD! I
DON'T SIGN
THE CONTRACT!

DON'T WORRY
ABOUT IT,
FRED! A
LITTLE REST,
AND WE'LL
HAVE FERNAND
DISAPPEAR
FOREVER!
HERE, HAVE
YOUR CONFEE!
WE'RE ALL
PACKED TO
LEAVE!



THE NEXT DAY, AT THE PALMSTONE ARCADE
IN ATLANTIC CITY...

A-AAH, SMALL THAT
SAYT A/E! I FEEL
BETTER, ALREADY! YOU
GO DOWN AND TAKE
A WALK! I'LL TRY TO
GET SOME WORK
DONE, OLDDA!

I WISH YOU WOULDN'T,
FRED! I DON'T WANT
A PATIENT ON MY
HANDS!



WHEN GLORIA RETURNED FROM HER PARK
A FEW HOURS LATER...

FRED, ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

(YAWN) I FEEL GREAT,
AND WHAT'S MORE, I'VE
FINISHED 'THE
VENDETTA'!





I WANT TO READ...
WHAT IF THE WORLD
IS THIS? THE PAGES
ARE BLANK! IT
CAN'T BE!

ARE YOU SURE YOU DIDN'T
FALL ASLEEP AND DREAM
IT? IT'S BEEN ON YOUR
646-CONCERN MIND!
THOSE THINGS
WILL HAPPEN!



I KNOW I FINISHED
IT! SOMEHOW IT'S BEEN
EXPANDED! LOOK!
IT'S THAT DEVILISH
PHANTOM AGAIN!

AH, MY GOOD
FRIENDS! IT WAS
NOT HARD TO FIND
YOU! YOU ARE MAKING
DIFFICULTIES, MR.
LATHROP!



YOU'RE DEAD WHETHER I
TALK YOU IN THIS
ROOM OR NOT! WHY
DON'T YOU GO BACK
TO YOUR ROTTER
GRAB AND LEAVE
US ALONE!

I AM NOT DEAD! I WILL
PROVE IT! GO TO MEXICO
CITY! YOU CAN FIND ME IN
LA CALLE DE SOLDADO
NUMBER 49! AND REMEMBER
YOU NOW THE VENDETTA
GANG CAN KILL ME!



BUT AS THE SPECTRAL FIGURE OF FATE ENTERED...

WELL, SO
YOU STILL
FIND ME!
I AM SORRY!
I AM SICK
OF YOUR
LECTURES!
BAM!

A DOUBLE TALK
OF MISERY MUST
UNFOLD! HAVE
PATIENCE! ALL
ROADS LEAD
TO THE GRAVE
AND NO TRUSTING
DE THINGS WILL
GAIN A MOMENT'S
REPRIEVE!

I DON'T KNOW
WHAT IT IS,
GLORIA! BUT
LOOK, AT LEAST
HE'S AFRAID OF
SOMETHING!



A FEW HOURS LATER...

IT'S NO USE,
GLORIA! I
CAN'T FIND
THE WORDS!
THAT AWFUL
PRESSURE
IN MY BRAIN
WOULDN'T LET
UP!

THERE'S ONLY
ONE THING TO
DO, FRED... PRESUME
THIS FERNAND TO
HIS OWN! WE'LL
GO TO MEXICO CITY
AND GET TO THE
BOTTOM OF THIS!



TEN DAYS LATER...

THE OLD
GRANDDAD!
FERNAND
USED TO LEAD
HIS BANDITS
ACROSS HERE
IN WEEKLY
RAIDS! HE
WAS A
BLOODY
CUSTOMER!

YES, AND
HE GRABBED
LIFE'S SISTER
WELL, FEAR FROM
HERE! LIFE
NEVER FOR-
GAVE HIM! AND IT WAS
HE WHO FINAL-
LY KILLED
FERNAND,
WASN'T IT?



SOME HOURS LATER...

WELL, HERE
WE ARE! NOW
HOW IN THE
WORLD ARE
WE GOING TO
FIND LA CALLE
DE SOLDADO,
THE STREET
FERNAND
MENTIONED
AS HIS
HIDEOUT?

WE'LL ASK
THE HOTEL
MANAGER! HE MUST
HAVE A
STREET
MAP OF
THE CITY!





THE ACCURSED
DOG SHOULD
BE IN HIS ROOM!
SOON HE WILL
FEEL MY
COLD
STEEL!

THE FANTASY!
YOU CAN'T
KILL A DEAD
MAN, LOPE!



LOPE!
NOT!
DON'T!

YOU WILL DIE, SLAYER
OF MY BROTHER! THE
VENDETTA HAS
SENT ME!



EEEEEN!



WHA? THEY'RE DONE!
VANISHED INTO THE AIR!
I-- I MUST BE LOSING
MY MIND! I MUST
GET OUT OF HERE!



AND MEANWHILE, AN ECHO WAS REPERCUSSING
THE CHAOTIC RE-ENACTMENT OF THE BRUTAL
BROTHER'S DEATH, BACK IN THE HOTEL JAMMET--

WHA?
WHAT
DO YOU
WANTS

THIS IS MEXICO CITY, MY HOME,
WHICH YOU ARE FIGHTING FOR THAT
STUPID BOOL. YOUR HUSBAND WILL
NEVER FINISH! NOT! NO!



SUDDENLY THE SHORTLY PRIOR OF FERNAND
CHANGES SEEMED IN ADOPT...

CAN'T YOU LEAVE
US ALONE? WHA?!

NOT! NOT!
ATTENTION!



AND AT THE VERY SAME MOMENT, WHEN AERO
GAINED THE STREET AFTER A TERRIBLE
FLIGHT DOWN THE STAIRS...

THE HORSE AND THE CAB ARE GONE AND
THE HOUSE IS A MASS OF RUBBISH! HAS
THIS REALLY HAPPENED TO ME? AM I
REALLY FIRED LATER? OR SOME
DISMOUNTED SPIRIT? IT'S DRIVING
ME INSANE! I MUST GET BACK
TO THE HOTEL!

WHEN FRED STAGGERED BACK TO THE HOTEL...

IT WAS TOO FOOLISH TO DESCRIBE! FERNAND SCREAMED AND THEN THE WHOLE SCENE VANISHED, LIKE A CURTAIN HAD COME DOWN ON A PLAY!

BUT HE WAS HERE, ROCKING AWAY, UNTIL HE DROPPED OUT IN ADOBY AND THEN DISAPPEARED! THE WHOLE THING IS AN INCREDIBLE NIGHTMARE!

GLORIA, COME HERE, QUICK! WE'RE LIVING IN SOME CRAZY SIXTH DIMENSION! LOOK, THE LAST CHAPTER IS FINISHED, AND WRITTEN IN THE WRISTED HANDWRITING!

THE STORY WAS FINISHED LONG AGO! BUT FOOLISH FERNAND CHARLES WROUGHT TO DELAY MY MOVING FINGER, YET COULD NOT CANCEL HALF A LINE!

and here I placed cold steel into the cold heart of Fernand Charles
The End

GLORIA, WE MUST FIND THE HOUSE AGAIN! I'VE GOT TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT SUCH A PLACE EXISTED, FOR MY OWN SANITY!

I'VE COMING, FRED!

SOON...

THIS IS IT! BUT HOW CAN WE EVER COME AT ITS HISTORY OR WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE?

THAT PLEASENT! PERHAPS HE'S FAMILIAR WITH IT!

THIS HOUSE? IT HAS A VERY BLOODY HISTORY! THE GREAT BANDIT, FERNAND CHARLES, WAS KILLED HERE MANY YEARS AGO! IT IS SAID THAT EVEN THE STONES ARE HAUNTED!

SO FERNAND DID DIE HERE AND MY BOOK TELLS THE TRUTH! I CAN'T FINISH MY BOOK! I DON'T KNOW!

VERY DID FERNAND MATERIALIZE FOR ME! IF HE WAS ALREADY DEAD, DO HE TRY TO PREVENT ME FROM FINISHING MY BOOK? I DON'T KNOW!

FERNAND THOUGHT HE WAS A MAN OF DESTINY WHO COULD REVERSE THE DECISIONS OF THE FUTURE BY CHANGING HIS WRITTEN HISTORY! BUT NO MAN CAN ESCAPE HIS TRUE FATE! THE MYSTIC THREAD OF EACH MAN'S DESTINY I WEAVE AT BIRTH, AND ONLY I CAN UNRAVEL IT!

The End

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